United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ On the eve of United Nations Conference Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, its Secretary-General tells correspondents he does not expect commitment of Governments to come all at once, but predicts important first-step commitments on financial issues.

+ Secretary-General says Security Council decision to impose sanctions against Yugoslavia has created "new situation" regarding Council demand for withdrawal or disarming and disbanding of Yugoslav People's Army and Croatian Army in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

+ Secretary-General expresses concern over recent developments in the Gaza Strip and especially safety and economic well-being of Palestinians residing there.

+ Secretary-General says "serious delays" in implementing cease-fire agreements signed by FMLN and Government of El Salvador last December have "undermined each side's confidence in the other's good faith".

+ Some $526 million pledged by participants at International Pledging Conference on the Drought Emergency in Southern Africa as it ends today in Geneva.

+ United Nations inspection team says Iraq appears to have destroyed its ballistic missiles production capability.

+ Trusteeship Council suspends current session after adopting series of conclusions and recommendations with respect to Palau.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali arrived in Rio de Janeiro this morning, where he will open the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development tomorrow, 3 June.

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On the eve of the environmental meeting, Maurice Strong, the Secretary-General of the Conference told the international press corps that in the two and a half years of preparations leading to the Conference, consensus had been reached on 98 per cent of some of the most complex, far-ranging and substantive issues ever put before the world. He cited the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development -- the 27 principles to govern behaviour in a sustainable world -- and made it clear it was necessary to reorient priorities as the world was now facing its greatest ever security challenge.

The UNCED Secretary-General stressed that once the concept of global security was accepted and given priority, one of the most cost-effective investments would be to help the developing world revitalize their economies and combat poverty which, he said, had become "morally repugnant" and destructive to the environment. Looking ahead, Mr. Strong said he did not expect the commitment of Governments to come all at once. What could be expected, he said, was that there would be important first-step commitments on the financial issues. However, the final test would be degree to which Governments actually carried out the commitments they undertake in Rio.

Meanwhile, a United Nations spokesman said today that so far 68 heads of State, 46 Prime Ministers, 7 Vice-Presidents and some 7,000 accredited press representatives had already arrived in Rio de Janeiro for tomorrow's historic Conference which will continue until Sunday, 14 June.

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The Security Council's decision to impose sanctions on Yugoslavia (Montenegro and Serbia) has created a "new situation" with regard to certain provisions of resolution 752 (1992), especially the Council's demand that all units of the Yugoslav people's Army (JNA) and elements of the Croatian Army now in Bosnia and Herzegovina be withdrawn; disbanded and disarmed; or be subject to the authority of the Government of that republic, the Secretary-General has stated.

In his report to the Security Council, dated 30 May, the Secretary-General said resolution 752 assumed that those processes would be agreed upon voluntarily by those in political and operational control of the troops concerned. He said it was "difficult to see how the solutions demanded by the Council could be achieved". The Secretary-General pointed to recent experience which, he said, has indicated that "less respect" was shown for an international presence in the former Yugoslavia than in other situations where international observers have played a role.

The Secretary-General expressed the hope that the determination of the international community to end the fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina would make it easier to negotiate the necessary agreements.
(Document S/24049)

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The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Coordinator of Emergency Relief, Jan Eliasson, said he was "deeply heartened" by the generous response, and the Chairman of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), Quett Ketumile Masire, President of Botswana, said that the SADCC countries could now approach the coming months with greater certainty.

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The Special Commission set up under Security Council resolution 687 (1991), in connection with the disposal of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, has verified that Iraq did destroy ballistic missiles and missile production equipment as it claimed on 19 March to have done.

The inspection team, which visited 15 designated sites in Iraq from 14 to 22 May, expressed confidence that, provided those missiles and equipment were indeed the essence of the country's ballistic production capability, that capability had been destroyed. However, it would not be able to state categorically that Iraq no longer had any production capability for proscribed ballistic missiles until the Special Commission received from Iraq the full disclosure of its proscribed weapons programmes, as required under the Security Council resolutions.

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The desire of the leadership of Palau, the last remaining Territory of the International Trusteeship System, to end trusteeship at an early date and the firm support of the Administering Authority for a settlement of Palau's political status were emphasized this morning as the Trusteeship Council suspended its 59th session.

During its six-day meeting, the Council considered the political, economic and social advancement of Palau, as it examined the annual report of the Administering Authority, the United States, considered the findings of a recent Visiting Mission to the Territory and heard statements by representatives of the territorial government and of a petitioner representing a group of Palauan citizens.

As Shirin Tahil-Kheli, the representative of the Administering Authority, pointed out to the Council in her concluding statement, if the upcoming plebiscite in Palau is successful, the United Nations Trusteeship System will become a thing of the past.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has deplored the recent developments in the Gaza Strip, where tension remains high following several violent incidents, according to a statement issued at Headquarters today.

The Secretary-General especially expressed concern about the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians residing in the area, with respect both to their physical and economic well-being. Citing the Security Council's Presidential Statement of 4 April, he urged Israel to abide scrupulously by its obligations under the 1949 Geneva Convention on the protection of civilians in time of war.

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"Serious delays" in implementing various provisions of the cease-fire agreements signed by the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) and the Government of El Salvador last December have undermined each side's confidence in the other's good faith, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

In his new report to the Security Council on the situation in El Salvador, dated 26 May, he says the process to end the 12-year civil conflict and return to a normal political process "is not an easy one". The Secretary-General particularly expresses concern about what he calls "the continuing failure of both sides to concentrate all their forces in the designated locations" which was supposed to have been completed by 2 March. He says suspicions that the FMLN is "retaining clandestine caches of arms and ammunition" have had a destabilizing effect on the whole implementation process.

The Secretary-General reported that during a telephone conversation on 15 May, Schafik Handal of the General Command of the FMLN told him that FMLN was participating seriously in the meetings with the Government and wanted to adhere to the existing agreements and not renegotiate them. Mr. Boutros-Ghali expressed his steadfast support for the agreements and his readiness to do all he could to help both sides implement them.
(Document S/23999)

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The equivalent of $526 million was pledged by participants in the two-day International Pledging Conference on the Drought Emergency in Southern Africa which ended today in Geneva. The funds are intended to help address the crisis which threatens 18 million people in the region with starvation.

The Conference adopted a statement in which it strongly urged all interested parties to do all possible to facilitate emergency relief operations, to cooperate fully to ensure a coordinated regional response to the drought and to guarantee the safe passage and facilitate the distribution of humanitarian relief supplies via land, sea and air.

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